

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE **A1**NEW YORK TIMES
20 November 1986

PRESIDENT ORDERS SALES OF WEAPONS TO IRAN STOPPED

CONGRESS TO BE BRIEFED

He Defends Earlier Shipments and Says the Decision Was 'Mine and Mine Alone'

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Nov. 19 — President Reagan said tonight that no further arms would be sent to Iran, and he promised to provide full information to Congress about his decision to sell weapons to Teheran.

In a nationally broadcast news conference, Mr. Reagan sought to blunt domestic and international criticism of his decision to begin a secret arms relationship with Iran and acknowledged that there were major differences within the Administration about his decision.

That decision, he said, was "mine and mine alone."

'No Further Sales'

"To eliminate the widespread but mistaken perception that we have been exchanging arms for hostages," Mr. Reagan said, "I have directed that no further sales of arms of any kind be sent to Iran."

Mr. Reagan denied that Secretary of State George P. Shultz had threatened to resign because of his opposition to the policy on Iran. The President defended his action as a "correct decision" and asserted that two more American hostages would have been released but for publicity given the operation by hostile elements in Iran.

Mr. Reagan's comments on American dealings with Iran were his most detailed so far on the controversy, which has emerged as one of the most serious foreign policy crises of his Presidency.

Reagan Looks Somber

The sale of military equipment to Iran has stirred questions about White House credibility, left European and Arab allies uncertain about American motives and raised the possibility that Mr. Shultz was about to resign.

Looking somber, frowning at times as he responded to questions for 38 minutes in the packed White House East Room, Mr. Reagan insisted that he authorized the secret transfer of military equipment to Iran to open a dialogue with Teheran, and not as ransom for American hostages held in Lebanon by a pro-Iranian group.

Mr. Reagan said Mr. Shultz had "never suggested" that he planned to resign. "He has made it plain that he will stay as long as I want him, and I want him," Mr. Reagan said.

Mr. Reagan insisted, under continued questioning, that his Administration had sought to establish a tentative relationship with Iran at the outset and that he had no plans for further arms shipments to Iran or Iraq. Mr. Reagan termed his decision "a high-risk gamble."

"What we were aiming for I think made it worthwhile, and this was a waiver of our own embargo," he said. "The embargo still stays now and for the future."

At another point Mr. Reagan said two other hostages in Iran could have been freed "if there had not been so much publicity" about the shipments.

At the news conference, Mr. Reagan denied reports that the Israelis were involved in arms shipments to Iran with the acquiescence of the United States. Mr. Reagan said the United States had "nothing to do" with other countries' actions, despite recent assertions by his chief of staff, Donald T. Regan, that the United States was aware of Israeli arms supplies to Iran.

Tense and Defensive

As the session with reporters went beyond the usual 30 minutes, Mr. Reagan grew increasingly tense and defensive about his decision.

"I've just been trying to answer all of your questions as best I can," the President said. "And I don't feel I have anything to defend about at all." Mr. Reagan, his face drawn, said tersely that his decision was not a "fiasco."

On relations with the Soviet Union, Mr. Reagan said many positive results had come from his meeting last month with Mikhail S. Gorbachev, the Soviet leader. But the agreements reached on limiting long-range and intermediate-range missiles were not "on the table" at the Geneva arms talks, he said.

The Iceland meeting, he added, was the first time any Soviet leader had proposed "eliminating weapons they already had."

The President said he was optimistic that he and Mr. Gorbachev would meet again before his Presidency ends.

On Nicaragua

Asked if the "obvious change in policy toward Iran" might be extended toward the Nicaraguan Government, Mr. Reagan said "no" and added, "We still hold to our position, and Iran is still on our list of nations that have been supporting terrorism."

Mr. Reagan said the United States sold the weapons when the Iranians "gave us evidence that policy was changing." The United States went through with the sales to give the Iranians "prestige and muscle there."

Asked why he thought the American

people would support sending weapons to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Iranian leader, President Reagan replied that the United States was dealing with individuals in Iran, some of whom were in the Iranian Government.

"It was not a meeting of the American head of state and the Iranian head of state," Mr. Reagan said, adding that his Administration believed that the secret talks and weapons sales were necessary to show that the Iranians were dealing with people representing the American President.

Asked how he could be certain he was negotiating with moderates in Iran, Mr. Reagan said the United States "had information that led us to believe there are factions in Iran, many of them with an eye towards the fact that sooner or later, there would be a change in the government."

The Administration's dealings with Iran have been predicated on the idea that it was encouraging "moderate" groups in Iran that favored an end to the Iran-Iraq war and warmer relations with the United States. Many members of Congress and area experts have questioned the Administration's reading of the situation in Iran, arguing that there are really no factions interested in closer ties with Washington.

National Security Council

Mr. Reagan rejected a suggestion that he shake up the National Security Council staff, which has been accused of running paramilitary operations from the White House. He said he did not believe such action was "called for."

He said that key Cabinet members

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and the Director of the Central Intelligence had been informed of the policy.

In response to a questioner who painted him as a beleaguered and defensive President, Mr. Reagan said he did not feel "I have anything to defend about all," adding that he still believed he made the correct decision in regard to Iran and that it "achieved some portion" of its goals.

Mr. Reagan was asked whether he blamed the American press for the failure to win the release of two more hostages. He did not answer the question directly, but noted that the original "leak" about the arms shipment to Iran came from a pro-Syrian magazine in Beirut.

President Reagan, explaining why the Administration chose to ship arms to Iran, said the Iranians dealing with American emissaries gave assurances that Iran was ending its support of terrorism.

"We said, there's a very easy way for you to verify that, and they're being held hostage in Lebanon." He said American negotiators were told that some associated with terrorism had been jailed in Iran.

Mr. Reagan asserted that the Iranians had followed through on its pledge to forgo terrorism. Earlier this week, Mr. Shultz said that in his view, Iran had not lessened its support for terrorism in the last year.

Mr. Reagan said the Administration was trying to bring Iran back "into the family of nations." He said the groups in Iran that the Administration was negotiating with needed the "prestige" that an arms shipment could give them.

Mr. Reagan's news conference — his eighth of the year, and his first since Aug. 12 in Chicago — was plainly an attempt to blunt bipartisan Congressional criticism that secret arms dealings with Iran had undercut American policy and called into question the credibility and competence of the Administration in foreign affairs.

For years the United States had publicly sought a worldwide embargo against weapons shipments to Iran, which is fighting a six-year-old war with Iraq. The arms sale not only appeared to directly violate American neutrality in the Iran-Iraq war, but it also seemed to undermine public efforts by the United States to press allies to stop dealing with a country, Iran, that has been cited by the State Department as supporting terrorism.

The secret American relationship with Iran was first disclosed more than two weeks ago by a pro-Syrian weekly magazine in Beirut, and further details were offered in a public speech by the Speaker of the Iranian Parliament, Hojatolislam Hashemi Rafsanjani.

'Send a Signal'

It was confirmed by American officials that Robert C. McFarlane, the former national security adviser, and other Americans made a secret trip to Teheran last May to negotiate with so-called moderate elements there, to improve ties and seek the release of the American hostages held in Lebanon by a pro-Iranian group.

Mr. Reagan acknowledged on Nov. 12, in a White House meeting with Con-

gressional leaders that the United States had sent military supplies to Iran. The next night, in a speech to the nation from the Oval Office, Mr. Reagan said he had authorized the transfer of "small amounts of defensive weapons and spare parts" to Iran to "send a signal" that the United States was prepared to seek a relationship with the Islamic fundamentalist nation after years of estrangement.

United States-Iranian ties were severed during the 444-day hostage crisis, which ended on Jan. 20, 1981, the day Mr. Reagan took office.

Although Oval Office speeches and public appearances by Mr. Reagan have proved effective in the past in moving public opinion, two polls have shown public disapproval of the Iran overtures running higher than 70 percent.

The White House said today that it had received 3,147 telephone calls after the speech last Thursday and that 2,000 were favorable. It has usually been the case that positive responses outweigh negative ones in such calls after a Presidential statement, White House officials acknowledge.

Beyond this, the speech apparently failed to diminish the divisions within the Administration about Iran policy. Neither Secretary of State Shultz nor Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger have sought to defend the operation and, aides said, both men opposed it at the outset and left it in the hands of the National Security Council staff under Vice Adm. John M. Poindexter.